UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

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Before the

UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

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Good morning Chairman Stevens, Co-Chairman Inouye, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about aviation security and to continue our dialogue regarding improvements to physical screening of airline passengers and baggage.

Created in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Transportation Security Administration continues to pursue its vital mission of protecting our Nation's transportation systems. With ATSA as its statutory foundation, TSA has worked with the airlines, airports, shipping industry, flight crews, law enforcement, and passengers to take aviation security orders of magnitude beyond where it stood on 9/11. Today, our challenge is to keep it fresh, to make our security regime as flexible, dynamic, adaptable, and unpredictable as the enemy we face**.**

When I appeared in December before this Committee I noted the numerous independent layers of security that reinforce each other. The recent classified GAO test demonstrated that an individual security layer can probably be beaten; but, together, the layers of security network are formidable. Physical screening at the airport is only one these layers.

Aviation security begins well before a passenger arrives at the airport.

1. U.S. government agencies work with others around the globe to identify and disrupt terrorist activities at their source.

2. Customs and Border Protection activities further identify potential terrorists and bar their entry into the United States.

3. Federal, State, and local law enforcement work together with the FBI in Joint Terrorism Task Forces across the United States to identify and disrupt terrorist activities within the U.S.

4. A No-Fly system is used to prevent anyone known to an agency of the U.S. government to be a threat to commit a terrorist act from flying into or in the United States.

5. Airline flight crews and airport employees who have access to an aircraft are subject to an even stricter vetting standard than the No-Fly analysis.

These first five security elements mean that anybody known to U.S. intelligence or law enforcement agencies as a terrorist or a close terrorist associate never gets close to an airplane. But there is much more.

6. An additional, risk-based computer-assisted pre-screening of passengers is conducted before a boarding pass is issued.

7. Hundreds of canine teams and local law enforcement officers are working at airports across the country to identify suspicious articles or people.

8. Surveillance activities take place in and around the airport environment on a daily basis.

All of this happens before a passenger even shows up at a TSA checkpoint.

9. At the checkpoint, a professional, well-trained, experienced team of Transportation Security Officers (TSO), assisted by multiple technologies, screens passengers and their carry-on bags for weapons and explosives.

10. In the baggage area, similarly well-trained, experienced Transportation Security Officers use a variety of technologies to screen baggage, and, when necessary, they physically search baggage to resolve anomalies.

Then, on the aircraft:

11. Thousands of Federal Air Marshals fly undercover on a very significant number of flights, both domestic and international.

12. Thousands of pilots who undergo special training and become Federal Flight Deck Officers are authorized and ready to protect the cockpit with firearms.

13. Other local, State, and Federal law enforcement officers travel armed as part of their normal duties and are prepared to intervene.

14. Hardened cockpit doors prevent unauthorized access to the flight deck.

15. And sitting on every airplane are passengers who remember the courage and commitment of the men and women on United Flight 93, and who are prepared to act, if necessary.

Each and every one of these 15 security layers is important.

Important Principles of Passenger Screening

Two important principles drive our decisions about the physical screening of passengers. First, we are focusing our investments in both people and technology on the highest risks. As we discussed at the hearing last December, this means that we are placing less emphasis on, and spending less time finding items that do not pose a threat of taking over an airplane. For example, taking small scissors and certain small tools off the prohibited items list has allowed us to spend TSO time on training to find the more serious threat of improvised explosive devices. Since last November, more than 20,000 TSOs have received instructor-led training in enhanced explosives detection. Additionally, over 20,500 TSOs have taken on-line training that includes simulated image detection instruction. Within the next several months, we anticipate that all checkpoint screeners will have completed both on-line training and instructor-led hands-on training in explosives detection.

Second, we seek to avoid giving terrorists an advantage based on our predictability. We know that terrorists will look for ways to defeat our security measures, and that they will adapt to changes in our security measures. If we follow exactly the same procedures everywhere every time, we make it easier for terrorists to break the security code. If, on the other, we build a measure of unpredictability into our operations, terrorists cannot use our consistency to their advantage in planning an attack. Our approach, therefore, must be based upon flexibility and unpredictability.

Our current screening process, however, is overly rigid, static and predictable. Terrorists can more easily "engineer around" these highly structured defenses. Therefore, we need to build more flexibility and more layers of security into our current checkpoint screening process, so that terrorists conducting pre-operational surveillance will not be able to plan based on what they observe.

Starting last December, TSA piloted new protocols to implement unpredictable screening procedures at ten airports. In these pilots, a customized schedule of enhanced screening procedures was created for each new TSO shift. The schedule dictated the type and frequency of property and/or passenger searches to be conducted. Each of the enhanced screening procedures was designed to specifically address the threat of explosives, and the procedures were carried out regardless of whether a passenger cleared the walk-through metal detector or a carry-on bag successfully passed through the x-ray machine. None of the airports reported any significant impact on passenger wait times, and for any individual passenger, the extra time required to undergo a particular screening procedure was very short. More importantly, however, no passenger – and, therefore, no terrorist – could predict exactly what screening procedure he or she would

be subject to. Based on this successful pilot, we intend to incorporate similar unpredictable additional screening into our standard operating procedures.

In addition, TSA has begun developing a plan to train TSOs in behavior pattern recognition and to begin deploying trained individuals at high-risk airports. Last December, TSA piloted the use of behavior pattern recognition techniques at some ticket checker positions in ten airports (including Logan Airport in Boston, which began utilizing trained TSOs at ticket checker positions in September 2005). Each airport in the pilot utilized five to eight TSOs from that airport who had received classroom and on-the-job training in behavior pattern recognition techniques. If a passenger was identified as exhibiting behaviors indicative of fear, stress and/or deception, they were either referred for additional screening, or referred for selectee screening and an evaluation interview with a law enforcement officer. Under the program now being developed, trained TSOs can be deployed in conjunction with a variety of functions, including checkpoint screening, passenger verification (ticket checking), gate screening, or as part of specific threat mitigation efforts. This capability will add further unpredictability to passenger screening at the airport.

A Professional, Highly Motivated Workforce

Since returning to TSA almost nine months ago, I have been reminded daily that TSA is full of Americans who serve their country with dignity and diligence. Our Transportation Security Officers are at the front-line**.** They have difficult, complex jobs. They must evaluate the behavior of every passenger who seeks to board a commercial airliner; identify and find weapons and explosive devices that may have been hidden in luggage or clothing; perform hand searches of personal belongings, some of which may contain dangerous articles or weapons; pat down individuals who set off alarms or are selected for secondary screening; operate sophisticated equipment used to detect explosives or other dangerous weapons; and be able to control people who seek to do harm, while expediting the passage of law-abiding customers and workers.

TSOs have frequent and recurrent contact with airline passengers and employees, airport employees and vendors, and law enforcement personnel, all of whom must follow strict security requirements before gaining access to secure areas of airports. On a daily basis, they interact with people of different nationalities, cultures and backgrounds, and who have varying degrees of experience with the security laws, regulations, and procedures which TSOs must implement and enforce. In this environment, TSOs encounter fear, cynicism and stress among the traveling public. They must be able to deliver business-like directions to guide travelers through security procedures, and must remain professional, even when travelers become aggravated or angry by procedures.

As you know, when TSA was created in 2002, a centralized hiring and human resources infrastructure was created to support the rapid stand-up of the Federalized screening workforce. Now that the agency is essentially hiring to maintain an employee base of 43,000 TSO FTEs**,** that centralized model is no longer cost-effective. We have begun, therefore, to develop a local hiring and training system in order to achieve

efficiencies and better meet our current and expected hiring requirements. These requirements include an increase in the proportion of our screening workforce that is part-time, to better match the daily peak-load workflow at airports.

In addition, we recognize that high employee turnover rates drive up hiring and training costs, and lower the overall experience level of our workforce. Yet our screening workforce has few upward mobility opportunities within their profession, and TSA has not fully utilized performance incentives. Therefore, we have reclassified the agency's 43,000 screeners as Transportation Security Officers (TSOs). This new classification acknowledges the judgment and skills required and the standards to which we hold our workforce. It also gives TSOs an opportunity to step onto a career ladder and apply for DHS law enforcement positions. In addition, in order to encourage top performance, we are deploying a pay-for-performance system and have requested an additional $10 million in FY 2007 to support pilot programs to improve recruitment and retention.

TSA has also taken steps to reduce TSO injury rates, which are a significant drain on our workforce. Based on the recommendations of our Screener Injury Task Force, we have implemented a TSA-wide nurse case management program to assist TSOs in getting the medical attention they need to return to work as soon as possible. In addition, we are sending teams of industrial engineers to evaluate the 25 airports with the worst injury rates and make recommendations for improvements, including simple configuration changes and small equipment purchases (like roller tables and floor mats) that could have significant impacts on injury rates.

Technology

Technology plays a critical role at TSA, now and in the future. We deploy sophisticated and effective technology in all phases of our security process. We invest in new technology that holds the promise for better security, more efficiently delivered. I believe that we are in a period where we have deployed the best, most reliable, and operationally effective technology available. There are many promising new technologies, such as Explosives Trace Portals (ETPs) Automated Carry-On Bag Explosives Detection Systems (EDS), and Whole Body Imaging Technology (backscatter). However, until that technology is available, we are best served by a focus on getting the most out of what we have deployed today – in terms of both people and equipment. When the technology is available, it should be ready for widespread economical deployment, as part of an integrated screening process that includes behavior pattern recognition, document checking, and other security measures.

Closing

TSA's mission is to protect the Nation's transportation systems while facilitating the movement of people and commerce. We recognize the importance of physical screening to the security of our aviation network, and our risk-based strategy includes innovations and investments in training, workforce deployment, and technology. At the same time, we are committed to a strategy that goes far beyond physical screening. It

begins with intelligence gathered by multiple U.S. agencies that is analyzed, shared, and applied. It includes checking every passenger manifest against terror watch lists and observing behaviors and activities in the airport environment. And, finally, it includes a law enforcement presence in airports and on aircraft, and a partnership with airlines, airports, pilots, flight crew members, and the traveling public – all of whom are committed to stopping terrorists in their tracks.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to respond to the Committee's questions.